



Students at the Center

An Education Resource for:



Military Families



Military Leaders



School Leaders

Students at the Center: A Resource for Military Families, Military Leaders and School Leaders was co-created by the Department of Education Activity (DoDEA) and the Collaborative Communications Group.

Department of Defense Education Activity
4040 North Fairfax Drive
Webb Building
Arlington, VA 22203
Phone: 703-588-3200
Fax: 703-588-3091
Website: www.dodea.edu
Website: www.militaryk12partners.dodea.edu

Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) is a field activity of the Office of the Secretary of Defense. DoDEA's mission is to plan, direct, coordinate and manage the education programs for eligible dependents of U.S. military and civilian personnel of the Department of Defense. DoDEA provides an exemplary education that inspires and prepares all students for success in a dynamic, global environment.

Through DoDEA's Educational Partnership Program, it is working collaboratively with the U.S. Department of Education in efforts to ease the transition of military children and by providing resources to Local Education Agencies that educate an estimated 80% of military children. This initiative also provides information and support to increase understanding of the unique needs of military children and academic support to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for military children. DoDEA's expertise and mandates provide it the opportunity to champion quality educational opportunities for all military children.

Written and compiled by:

Kathleen Facon, Chief, Educational Partnership Branch,
Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA)

Terri Dietrich-Moose, Education Coordinator-Military Liaison,
Educational Partnership Branch, Department of Defense Education
Activity (DoDEA)

Collaborative Communications Group
1029 Vermont Avenue, NW
Ninth Floor
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: 202-986-4959
Fax: 202-986-4958
Email: info@collaborativecommunications.com
Web site: www.collaborativecommunications.com

Collaborative Communications Group is a strategic consulting firm that builds the capacity of individuals; organizations and networks to work collaboratively to create solutions that are better than any single entity could produce on its own. Through strategic consulting, dialogue and convening, creation of publications and tools, and community conversations, Collaborative helps organizations and networks to identify, share and apply what they know in ways that increase productivity and effectiveness. The ultimate objective of Collaborative's work is the improvement of the quality of public education and community life.

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Students at the Center

An Education Resource for:



Military
Families



Military
Leaders



School
Leaders

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Content Experts And Advisors:

Gerry Carlon, LCSW

Senior policy Analyst
office of the deputy Under Secretary of defense
Military Community and Family policy
office of Family policy, Children and Youth

Van Chaney

Headquarters Army Child, Youth and School Services
School Liaison program Specialist
Army Child, Youth and School Services Family
and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command,
U.S. Army installation Management Command

Charles S. (Chuck) Clymer Jr.

Child and Youth program Manager Commander navy
installations Command,
Headquarters, n9 Fleet and Family Readiness

Debbie Enright

Eastern Region Manager
Military Accounts Manager
teaching Strategies, inc.

Cathann A. Kress, Ph.D.

office of the deputy Under Secretary of defense
Military Community and Family policy
office of Family policy, Children and Youth

Melissa T. McQuarrie

director of Community Relations
virginia Beach City public Schools
dr. James G. Merrill
Superintendent
virginia Beach City public Schools

Joan L. Taylor

Retired teacher and military spouse

Captain James (Jim) Turner (Retired navy
and Retired High School teacher) and
Terry Turner (wife)

Candace Wheeler

Government Relations deputy director
national Military Family Association

Charles Boyer

Special Advisor for Military Families
U.S. department of Education

Cathy Schagh

director, impact Aid program
U.S. department of Education

Eric Waldo

Special Assistant to the Secretary of Education
U.S. department of Education

Kristen Walls-Rivas

Special Assistant to the director, impact Aid program
U.S. department of Education



Introduction

You are part of a very important group of people -- those who care about education and, specifically, those who care about education for the children of military service members. Children of military families face unique challenges that are unparalleled in the general student population.

If you are a family member or a service member yourself, you know first-hand the sacrifices that are made in order to serve in our Nation's Armed Forces – frequent moves, time away from family because of training and deployments and the uncertainty that comes from serving in harm's way.

If you are an educator with military families in your community, you may be aware of the challenges military families face as they deal with these issues: transfer of records, eligibility for extra-curricular activities, differences in achievement standards and academic requirements and the stress and anxiety from having a parent away.

If you are a military leader, you have undoubtedly faced situations where you need to provide information for both parents and local education agencies and sometimes help find solutions to challenges that are unique to service members' children.

In this guide, you will find resources designed to aid everyone involved in providing quality education for military children.

You will find information and resources to:

- Empower parents to be better advocates for their children and to more fully understand the rules and policies local education agencies must adhere to while meeting the needs of all of their students.
- Inform Military leaders on how to best to work with local education agencies to meet the needs of our families and to take advantage of resources available through DoD.
- Assist Local Education Agencies around the country who have within their populations, the children of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, National Guardsmen and Reservists.

To learn more about resources available for our military families, please visit our website at www.militaryk12partners@dodea.edu.

How To Use This Guide

This guide outlines the important policies, procedures, and best practices that will enable military families, military leaders, and school leaders to provide military-connected children the best possible support for success. For the purpose of this guide, the following are definitions of the three audiences using this guide:

Military family: An all-inclusive term representing the parents and guardians of school-age children of military members.

Military leadership: A military or civilian leader of any Military Service who has the responsibility for the quality of life of military families.

School leadership: A term representing Local Education Agencies (LEA), school administrators, superintendents, principals, school board members, counselors, and educators in a school system.

Throughout the guide there are also references to the importance of partnerships among each stakeholder group, including specific suggestions for collaboration. Evidence has shown that children are more likely to succeed when adult stakeholders find ways to collaborate on common goals. When military leaders are aware of the school options near their installation, and have positive communication with local school leaders, they can provide accurate and credible information for service members and installation personnel. Likewise, when schools and parents partner with the military, the children under their care are provided a greater level of support and advocacy.



MILITARY
FAMILIES



MILITARY
LEADERS



SCHOOL
LEADERS

This guide is written to lead the reader to basic information and relevant resources. While key definitions and foundational information are provided here, a vast array of resources is available through online and print publications to supplement the guide. The information is presented in five sections:



Chapter 1 – Foundational Information for All Stakeholders

The first section provides foundational information that military leaders, parents and school leaders alike need in order to understand the systems and policies they will encounter when supporting a child’s school experience.



Chapter 2 – Military Families

Parents and caregivers will find resources to support their children before and during a move as well as practical information about making quality school and enrichment choices in the new location.



Chapter 3 – Military Leaders

Leaders from various branches of the military will be guided to understand how best to support their transitioning staff in their search for quality educational settings for their school-aged children. They will also find best practice information about ways to partner with local school districts, aiding student transition further.



Chapter 4 – School Leaders

Whether superintendent, principal or school teacher, this section will provide current research and best practice tips to aid in providing a successful experience for a new military student and the school community as a whole.



Chapter 5 - Resources

The last section is a summary of all the online and print resources referenced in this guide. An annotated guide to Web sites and publications has also been provided.





Table of Contents

the U.S. Education System	7
department of defense (dod) Education initiatives	20

For All STakeholders

OBJECTIVES

Understand the basic policies and structures of the U.S. education system:

- School Governance
- Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)
- School Choice
- public School Funding
- other Relevant Education Laws and policies

Understand the Department of Defense (DoD) education initiatives:

- department of defense Education Activity (dodEA)
- department of defense and department of Education Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)
- department of defense Education partnership
- department of defense impact Aid program
- interstate Compact on Educational opportunity for Military Children
- School Liaison officers

The U.S. Education System

Education in the United States is in many ways strikingly similar from one classroom to another, yet at the same time, it can be different in many regards. The material that is being taught, how student understanding is gauged, and even how much is being spent on each student's education can vary drastically from one classroom to the next, and can greatly impact the success of military students who are much more likely to move from one school to another.

Education grew out of local communities, spreading across the country as settlers slowly marched from east to west. Today, the establishment of education as a basic right lies with each of the 50 States and territories, and as a result, means we have 50 different and unique systems for how we educate children. Within each local community, there is even more room for variation. Military families experience this perhaps more than any others, moving from one school district to another, often in different States. The key is to understand the basic foundation of the education system in our country, know what is most likely to change from one school to another, and learn how to navigate those differences to ensure the best educational experience for military children.

In this chapter the reader will be provided a foundational understanding of the U.S. education system, its laws, policies, funding systems, and current trends, with an emphasis on public education. Included in this discussion is information on the education-related Department of Defense (DOD) policies and programs. Armed with this information, parents can speak knowledgeably when seeking appropriate academic support for their children, and commanders and school leaders will understand how best to partner with each other to support military children.



School Governance

In order to understand the classroom experiences for children, it is important to get at least a basic understanding of the way the entire system is organized. School governance in the United States involves a myriad of players across Federal, State, and local levels of government. At the Federal level, Congress sets broad policy for education, with specific guidance and regulations and oversight coming from the U.S. Department of Education (ED). Congress also contributes roughly 10 percent of the total funding for public education in the United States. The local and Federal courts also play a role in setting policy for schools, mostly as a result to challenges to legislation. State boards of education and legislatures set policy at the State level, with strong attention from the governors, who also set a high priority on helping to set the agenda for what happens in public schools. Each State's Education Agency (SEA) carries the bulk of the implementation at the State level, with responsibility for developing guidance for State and Federal laws, ensuring compliance and providing technical assistance to local school districts. Local boards focus on setting priorities at the local level -- priorities that are carried out by superintendents, principals, and teachers.

The establishment of education as a right and requirement for school-aged children lies with each of the 50 States. As a result, each State has a unique system of education, meaning a different set of standards for what students should learn and know, a different method for assessing learning, and even different standards for what teachers should know before they enter a classroom. The impact of 50 individual State-based systems of education is far reaching, both for the adults who work in the system and for those families and students who are served by them, especially in today's global economy. For example, each of the 50 States has a unique set of standards students must learn and know. And for students the issue is even more complex: Moving from one State to another means an adjustment in what they are learning, when they learn it, and what they need to do to show progress. There is a current movement to create common standards that would be used across all 50 States. This movement could alter the above-described system of school governance.

Most parents, military leaders, and sometimes even school leaders will have little to no interaction with most of the stakeholders described above. Congress and the U.S. Department of Education, the State legislature, State board of education, and even the State education agency generally have very little direct interaction with the day-to-day operations in a school. There are several key players who are much more involved, and who are more likely to come into contact with the readers of this guide, including local school board members or mayors, depending on the governance structure.

Local school boards

Local school boards oversee the decision- and policymaking for individual school districts, ensuring that school leaders, teachers, parents, and students have the conditions needed to foster student success.¹ There are more than 95,000 local school board members nationwide. Local school board members tend to be elected, and as a result, are much more accessible to parents, military leaders, and school leaders. Parents can directly contact their local school board member with questions, they can testify before the board, and they can run for election to the board, among other things. Local boards focus on setting priorities for student learning; staff and resource allocations; and district, State and Federal reporting.

Local mayoral control of education

In recent years some local communities have moved away from a local school board-controlled system towards a mayoral-controlled system of education governance, New York City, and Washington, DC, being perhaps the most notable. This is another type of governance structure, with the mayor, and sometimes the city council, involved in setting policy and implementing education goals at the local level. This type of governance gives city officials more control over the school systems for which they are often held accountable in elections.

Local Education Agency (LEA)

At the district or school level, the Local Education Agency (LEA) is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school. This includes administering and reporting on standardized tests, overseeing and training teachers, establishing parent and student programs, and maintaining ongoing communication with the community. The school district superintendent is the chief administrative officer for a school district. Depending on the size of the district, there may be a layer of administrative officials that help to manage the district. From there, each school has a principal, perhaps an assistant principal, and a range of other staff, including counselors, teachers, tutors, and administrative staff.²





Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

The governing structures described above are established by the principal law affecting K–12 education, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was first enacted in 1965. The Act is an extensive statute that funds primary and secondary education. As mandated in the Act, funds are authorized for professional development, instructional materials, and resources to support education programs and promote parental involvement. The government has reauthorized the Act every five years since its enactment.

The most recent reauthorization of ESEA is known as the No Child Left Behind Act.^{3,4} Congress is overdue to reauthorize the legislation, which passed Congress in 2001 and was signed into law in 2002. Current stated goals of ESEA are to raise the academic performance of all children with the ultimate goal of 100 percent proficiency on State-level performance goals by 2013–2014.

Through the Federal budget and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, additional funds to schools and school districts are already being distributed through competitive grants that encourage innovation and partnerships between public schools and private non-profits. These initiatives are part of the stated goals of the current administration for the reauthorization of ESEA as follows:

- College and career ready students
- Great teachers and leaders
- Equity and opportunity
- Raise the bar and reward excellence
- Promote innovation⁵

It is hoped that these changes to ESEA will provide for more consistency in education quality across states and for all children.

Title I

One of the key components of ESEA, Title I, strives to improve the academic achievement of disadvantaged students. The basic function of Title I is to distribute funds through SEAs to local school districts with a high percentage of students from low-income families. Title I funds help students who are behind academically, or at risk of falling behind, by providing services such as hiring teachers to reduce class size, tutoring, computer labs, parental involvement activities, professional development, purchase of materials and supplies, pre-kindergarten programs and hiring teacher assistants or others.

A Title I school must have a percentage of low-income students that is at least as high as the district's overall percentage or have at least 35 percent low-income students (whichever is the lower of the two figures). This entitlement funding reaches more than 17-million children nationwide, roughly 60 percent from the elementary grades (kindergarten through grade five), 21 percent in the middle grades and 16 percent in high school.⁶

Accountability Under ESEA

The current ESEA legislation incorporates a strong system of accountability for results.

There are four foundational goals of ESEA:

- Hold school accountable for results
- Give States and districts flexibility in how they spend Federal money
- Use scientific research to guide classroom practice
- Involve parents by giving them information and choices about their children's education⁷

To that end, States are required to develop clear standards, align their schools' curriculum to those standards, and test students to ensure that they are at the level they need to be. It is important for parents to know that this law is the reason that students are tested through standardized assessments in each State and that schools are held accountable for ensuring that ALL students are being provided with a quality education.

States are required by ESEA to assess mathematics, reading and science, annually, in grades 3–8 and once in grades 10–12. It is the responsibility of each State to determine the particulars of the assessment. In other words, will the test be short answer, multiple choice, or essay response? Other issues, such as who develops the tests, what specific questions are on the test, and even who will grade the assessments are all matters left to each State.

Other provisions in the ESEA law require that professional development and teaching modalities are based on scientifically proven methods and that all students are taught by highly qualified teachers. Also, schools should engage parents proactively. Furthermore, schools are required to report on the progress of student achievement and other indicators, such as high school graduation rates, to meet another layer of accountability—from the general community.

The following information details some of the more specific features of the law and how they impact the classroom:

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) – When schools reach their State's student performance goals in math and reading for the year, they are said to meet "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP). Every State's AYP standards are different. States set their standards by using information on national standards, the difficulty level of state assessments, the definition of proficiency, and student performance on tests to determine the starting point for measuring student progress toward the 100-percent proficiency goal. Each State then establishes its own goals to be measured annually. Some States plan for a

the department of Education (Ed) samples schools and grades within schools to administer the annual national Assessment of Educational progress (NAEP). This test has often been called the "gold standard" of assessments because of its high technical quality and because it represents the best thinking of assessment specialists, education experts, teachers, and content specialists from around the nation. The results of NAEP are released as "the nation's Report Card" published by Ed. There are no results for individual students, classrooms, or schools. Teachers, principals, parents, policymakers, and researchers all use NAEP results to assess progress and develop ways to improve education in America. NAEP is a trusted resource and has been providing valid and reliable data on student performance since 1969

Source: http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/about/introduction_to_naep_2008.pdf



steady incremental academic improvement, while others expect rapid improvement at the beginning (or end) and more slowly in other years. Many States also include school attendance rates in their AYP standards.

Schools that fail to meet AYP are subject to progressive monitoring and state intervention by the SEA, with benchmarks set at 2, 3, and 5 years. A school or district can fail to meet AYP for a number of reasons, but generally does so because scores on standardized tests fall below their established levels for a particular demographic subgroup or because of low attendance rates. For example, a school might fail AYP because the scores for Hispanic students were below the target score for the assessments. Or perhaps the school only had 90 percent attendance, and the target was set higher. In most States, the specific AYP formula is complex and is often detailed in lengthy guidelines developed for school and district administrators.

Measures such as State-imposed curriculum, teacher training, student tutoring, or the complete takeover of the administration and staff of a school are all possible ramifications for failing to meet AYP. In California, for example, Program Improvement (PI) is the designation for Title I-funded schools and LEAs that fail to make AYP for two consecutive years. As part of ESEA requirements, Program Improvement schools and LEAs are responsible for implementing certain Federal and State measures during each year that they are in PI status. These requirements vary and often include a lengthy to-do list. In Year 1 for an LEA for example, the requirements include providing technical assistance to all PI schools, notifying parents of Public Improvement status and school-choice options, setting aside five percent of the Title I budget for professional development, providing school-choice options and establishing a peer-review process for reviewing revised school plans. For the specific schools within the LEA, the requirements for Year 1 include revising the school plan, using 10 percent of Title I funds for professional development and implementing plans promptly.⁸

While standardized tests are the main component used to gauge AYP, schools are also accountable for other indicators of quality under ESEA:

Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT) – The purpose of the HQT portion of ESEA is to ensure that all students, regardless of race or income level, are taught by highly qualified teachers. What it means to be “highly qualified” varies from State to State, there are three general criteria States must apply: teachers must have college degree, subject matter expertise and State licensure. The current law calls for all core-subject classes to be taught by HQTs by the end of the 2005–06 school year. Progress toward this goal has been made, with 81 percent of States reporting recently that at least 90 percent of their core subjects are taught by HQTs.⁹

Demographics – The reporting requirement under ESEA requires that schools disclose the ethnic, gender, special education, and English language

learner percentages of its students. Demographics also disclose the percentage of children receiving the federal food subsidy, called Free and Reduced Meals, which is based on family income. Schools that meet that state's definition for a "high percentage" qualify to become Title I schools, gaining access to special funds.

Attendance and High School Graduation Rates – Schools must not only report on overall daily student attendance as part of ESEA, but must also account for attendance during assessment periods. In addition, there are requirements for the percentage of students who must participate in the exams in order to ensure that schools are not just testing the highest-achieving students.

ESEA also requires schools and States to report how many students graduate from high school on time, in large part due to the dismal completion rates nationwide. Currently only 69%¹⁰ of students graduate on time in the United States, a rate that plummets for urban school districts and many individual States, especially those with a high percentage of minority students and children living in poverty. These measures were put in place to ensure that schools focus on the achievement of all students and that all graduates met minimum achievement standards.

Parental Involvement – A key element of ESEA is that parents and guardians are included and informed regarding school achievement standards. Through this aspect of the law, schools develop effective ways to engage parents. Title I schools must involve parents in overall planning at the district and school level and schools that have school-wide programs, such as academic achievement programs.¹¹

School Report Cards – ESEA requires that schools and school districts publicly post information about their schools' population and achievement relative to several scales of quality, such as test scores, teacher quality, and graduation rates, as described above. These results are typically broken down by subgroups to indicate whether or not a school or district has met AYP (described above). The report also includes the demographics of a school, number of Highly Qualified Teachers teaching core subject areas, school attendance and graduation rates. Report cards are generally recorded by the district and individual schools, but follow a general State-approved format. States are responsible for making the report cards easy to understand and readily available. The report cards are most often posted on State or district school Web sites or can be obtained by contacting those offices. Sometimes local newspapers also publish the results. (A more complete example of such report cards can be found in the Military Families section on page 50).¹²

English Language Learners (ELL) – The number of students who are English Language Learners (ELL) in the United States has sharply increased in recent years. As a result, policy and practice regarding these students have rapidly evolved in the last decade. The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) within the U.S. Department of Education (ED) keeps a close watch on compliance nationwide, under ESEA policy with the following guidelines for school district programming:

if a child attends a title i school that has been identified by the state as in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, parents can choose to send their child to another public school that is not so identified.

Source: national Council on parent involvement in Education
<http://www.ncpie.org/nclbaction/ayp.html>



- Identify students as potential ELLs
- Assess students' need for ELL services
- Develop a program which, in the view of experts in the field, has a reasonable chance for success
- Ensure that necessary staff, curricular materials, and facilities are in place and used properly
- Develop appropriate evaluation standards, including program exit criteria, for measuring the progress of students
- Assess the success of the program and modify it where needed¹³

The Offices of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (LEP), also within the U.S. Department of Education, focuses on closing the achievement gap for ELL students and have specific oversight for Title III in ESEA. Title III requires that each district do the following:

- Assess the English proficiency of all students with limited English proficiency
- Assess LEP students' progress in ways that fairly and accurately determine their knowledge
- Provide information to parents about the programs that are available, as well as the right to refuse services
- Provide information about the LEP program and a parent's rights in regard to LEP services
- Assess potential LEP students during the first two weeks of school, using a research-based instrument (results from the test administration must be shared with parents by phone conference, mail, or teacher-student-parent meeting)¹⁴

If a child is a first-year LEP student, he or she may participate in either the English/language arts assessment or LEP English proficiency assessment.¹⁵ After three years of attending school in the United States, a child must take the English version of the language arts portion of the test.¹⁶ School districts vary in when the assessments are administered, but information can generally be obtained from the school directly or by viewing the school or state assessment calendar on the Web.

School Choice

The term "school choice" means giving parents the opportunity to choose the school their child will attend. Traditionally, children are assigned to a public school according to where they live. That means parents and guardians wanting public education for their children generally have no choice of school and have to send their child to the school assigned to them by the district, regardless of the school's quality or appropriateness for their child.

To provide additional options for parents and guardians, forty-six States and the District of Columbia have adopted various public school choice options, sometimes called "Voluntary School Choice Programs." These districts offer a choice of schools among any public schools within the district boundary. The allowance of school choice is an effort to establish and open enrollment and to provide parents—particularly parents whose children attend low-performing public schools—with expanded education options. Where the choices exist, parents may send their children to another school within their district or State. Some districts may offer magnet programs for

children with special interests or charter school options under this program.¹⁷ Other options may include open enrollment among all public schools in a district or between districts.

A State's school-choice laws are sometimes a result of ESEA, which requires school-choice options where the existing school structures have not met AYP, for example, for a number of years. In these districts where parents and guardians can choose among various public school options, schools must let parents know each year if their child is eligible to transfer to another school, and districts must give parents more than one transfer option if more than one exists.

Districts must also pay for students' transportation costs, giving priority to low-income, low-achieving students if there are not enough funds available to pay for all students.

The growing number of choices for American school children includes the following, which provide geographic, subject matter, special interest, special needs, and/or income-based choices:

Charter schools – These are independent public schools designed and operated by educators, parents, community leaders, education entrepreneurs, and others. They are sponsored by designated local or education organizations, which monitor their quality and effectiveness but allow them to operate outside of the traditional system of public schools. However, they are required to meet AYP standards just as other public schools. A decade and a half after their inception, nearly 4,600 charter schools are serving over 1.4 million children across 40 States and the District of Columbia. They are the fastest growing type of school in America, but their success has not yet been established due to the short period in which they have been operational. Charters must practice open admission policies and are forbidden to be selective.¹⁸

Magnet schools – These schools are designed to focus on a specific subject, such as science or the arts; follow specific themes, such as business, technology, communications, humanities or law; or operate according to certain models, such as career academies or a school-within-a-school. Some magnet schools require students to take an exam or demonstrate knowledge or skill in the specialty to gain admission, while others are open to students who simply express an interest.¹⁹

Tuition Vouchers – These are funds available, usually on a limited basis to qualifying families, to provide a portion of the public education funding allotted for their child to use toward tuition at the school of their choice, whether it is a religious or other type of private school. A few States offer choice scholarship programs specifically for students with special needs.²⁰

Homeschooling – This is instruction offered in a home, usually by a child's parent or guardian along with or through virtual learning programs conducted over the Internet. Some parents prepare their own materials, while others use materials produced by companies specializing in homeschool resources. Most States have general guidelines about the grade-level program of study for students who are homeschooled to ensure they meet graduation requirements and are fully prepared for post-secondary options. There are also policies in place to address nonacademic issues, such as participation in athletics or other extracurricular activities.²¹





Public School Funding

The United States spends almost a trillion dollars on all aspects of education each year. This amount is slightly above defense spending.²² School districts in the United States spend roughly \$530 billion annually.²³ In 2009, nearly \$450 billion was spent on elementary and secondary education: \$57 billion covered capital outlay, \$14.3 billion funded interest payments on debt, and \$7.4 billion was allocated to other programs such as adult education.²⁴ Public education financing in the United States varies from one State to the next and even from one school district to the next within the same State.

Generally, schools are funded using some combination of income taxes, corporate taxes, sales taxes, local property taxes, and finally the Federal Government.²⁵ It is the local portion of the funding—often captured in local property taxes—that has created a firestorm across the country between school districts within higher property-value areas and districts where property taxes cannot bridge the gap between what is available and what is needed to cover the cost of a child's education.

Funds for public education are distributed to school districts in a few ways: on a per-pupil basis, to cover the expense of an individual child's education, and categorically, to cover the expense of a particular program or facility.²⁶ Besides the Federal allocation based on the number of pupils, schools receive Federal funds in the ways listed below.

Per-pupil funding – These funds are allocated based on the number of students enrolled, by a particular date (usually late fall) in each school. It is a formula grant, for which States do not have to compete, beyond timely submission of enrollment data. The most recent analysis found that schools spent on average \$10,362 for each student.²⁷ Yet there is great variance across States, with Alaska spending the most per student (\$21,468) and Idaho (\$8,045) spending the least.

Title I funding – These funds, which are sometimes received by schools for additional staff or programs, are available for schools whose population meets the poverty guidelines to qualify for Title I funds. (See ESEA section on page 10)

Private grants and donations – Schools or school districts may also receive funding through philanthropic grant awards to supplement funds received through government sources. Schools sometimes use these funds to help with school equipment, facilities, and activity programs for students. Private individuals, local businesses, and corporations may also donate funds. Some districts have even developed policies surrounding private donations to help cover the widening gap between funding and expenditures. Most charter schools are able to leverage private funds because the laws under which they were created provide them more autonomy.

Impact Aid – This fund, among the largest programs under the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, is a federal formula grant program designed to relieve the financial burden placed on resources of local educational agencies (LEAs) in educating significant numbers of federally connected students – those who reside on military bases, low-rent housing properties, Indian lands or other federal properties, and/or have parents in the uniformed services or employed on eligible federal properties.

Many local school districts across the United States include within their boundaries parcels of land that are owned by the Federal Government. These school districts face special challenges: They must provide a quality education to the children and meet the requirements of the ESEA while sometimes operating with less local revenue than is available to other school districts because the Federal property is exempt from local property taxes.

Since 1950, Congress has provided financial assistance to these local school districts through the Impact Aid Program. Impact Aid was designed to assist local school districts that have lost property tax revenue due to the presence of tax-exempt Federal property or that have experienced increased expenditures due to the enrollment of federally connected children, including military children. The Impact Aid law provides assistance to local school districts with concentrations of children residing on Indian lands, military bases, low-rent housing properties, or other Federal properties and, to a lesser extent, concentrations of children who have parents in the uniformed services or employed on eligible Federal properties who do not live on Federal property.

Most Impact Aid funds, except for the additional payments for children with disabilities and construction payments, are considered general aid to the recipient school districts. These districts may use the funds in whatever manner they choose in accordance with their local and State requirements. Most recipients use these funds for current expenditures, but recipients may use the funds for other purposes such as capital expenditures. Some Impact Aid funds must be used for specific purposes.

School districts use Impact Aid for a wide variety of expenses, including the salaries of teachers and teacher aides; purchasing textbooks, computers, and other equipment; after-school programs and remedial tutoring; advanced placement classes; and special enrichment programs. Payments for children with disabilities must be used for the extra costs of educating these children.²⁸



Special Needs Laws and Policies

Three Federal laws provide the legal foundation for the education of children who have disabilities.

The primary laws in this area are as follows:

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – This Federal law ensures services for children with disabilities. First enacted by Congress in 1975, IDEA governs how States, school districts, and other public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. Infants and toddlers with disabilities from birth to age 2 receive early intervention services under IDEA Part C. Children and youth ranging in age from 3 to 21 receive special education and related services under IDEA Part B. One of the key components of IDEA Part B for schools, families and students is the individualized education program (IEP), which provides a blueprint for special education services.²⁹

Nondiscrimination Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504/

Regulations – This act prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities by any agency or organization that receives Federal funds. Recipients of Federal funds such as States, counties, cities, public and private schools, hospitals, clinics, etc., must make it possible for people with disabilities to participate in their programs and access their services. (An agency can be penalized by loss of Federal funding if it discriminates against a person with a disability) OCR acts on complaints it receives from parents, students, or advocates; conducts agency initiated compliance reviews; and provides technical assistance to school districts, parents, or advocates.³⁰

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) – (1990 Act) Like Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, ADA prohibits discrimination against students with disabilities. The ADA and Section 504 are described as nondiscrimination statutes rather than as entitlement statutes such as IDEA. They provide procedures to ensure that persons with disabilities

enjoy the same rights as persons without disabilities. When those rights are thought to have been violated, the ADA, like Section 504, provides a procedure for addressing the alleged violations.

ADA and Section 504 exist to benefit both those children with disabilities who require special education as well as those children who have a disability but are not eligible for special education services. To qualify for protection under ADA and/or Section 504, the child must show that the disability “substantially limits” a major life activity such as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, learning, working, taking care of oneself, breathing, and performing manual tasks. Many children with these impairments are eligible for special education services under IDEA. Some children, however, will not qualify for special education, but if found eligible under Section 504 or ADA, they will qualify for equipment, aids, or other accommodations needed to help them benefit from the school program.



Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

This is a Federal law that protects the privacy of a student's academic records. This law is under consideration by the U.S. Department of Education, but it currently gives a parent certain rights until a child reaches the age of 18 or attends school beyond the secondary level. Below are the most critical parts of FERPA regulations as outlined by the U.S. Department of Education. Under FERPA, schools are required to annually notify parents of their rights. The basic rights of parents and schools are the following :

- Parents have the right to inspect and review their child's education records. A child's school is not required to provide copies of records unless it is impossible for them to review the records otherwise. The schools may charge a fee for copies.
- Parents have the right to request that their child's school correct records when they feel there are errors. If the school decides not to revise the record, parents have the right to a hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to change the record, parents have the further right to submit a statement about their viewpoints to be included in the student's record.
- Generally, schools must have signed and dated written consent from a parent or guardian in order to disclose personally identifiable information from a child's education record. There are a few exceptions:
 - School officials with legitimate education interest
 - Other schools to which a student is transferring
 - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes
 - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student
 - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school
 - Accrediting organizations
 - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena
 - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies
 - State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law





Department of Defense (DoD) Education Initiatives

DoD and DoDEA, along with the Department of Education (ED) and other Federal agencies, have created strategic partnerships and policies helping military-connected children receive the support they need to achieve success academically.

As part of a long-standing tradition in the military, a variety of programs and services have been instituted to support the academic, social and emotional of the families and children of service members and officers. The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) provides quality pre-kindergarten through 12th grade educational opportunities and services to military dependents around the globe. DoDEA educates nearly 85,000 in 191 schools in 12 foreign countries, 7 States, Guam, and Puerto Rico with 8,700 educators. DoDEA incorporates evidence-based practices in teacher training, curriculum, and related activities.

DoDEA Schools

DoDEA's mission is to plan, direct, coordinate, and manage the education programs for eligible dependents of U.S. military personnel and civilian personnel of the DoD. Because dependents of military personnel face unique challenges due to frequent moves and family changes, DoDEA schools provide students with a uniform curriculum and standards.

DoDEA's schools are divided into three areas; Department of Defense Schools - Europe, Department of Defense Schools - Pacific / Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools - Guam, and the Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools. Within each of these three areas, schools are organized into districts headed by superintendents.

Performance

DoDEA measures student progress with multiple performance-based assessments. The TerraNova standardized test provides DoDEA with results that it can compare to a nationwide sample. DoDEA students also take the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which provides comparisons of student achievement in reading, writing, math, and science. All DoDEA schools are also accredited by one of the six regional accrediting agencies, which provide each school with an independent evaluation.

The agency has developed rigorous and demanding curriculum standards. The curriculum standards provide a framework for advancing every student to the highest levels of achievement by defining the knowledge, concepts, and skills that students should acquire at each grade level or within a course of study. The DoDEA standards for each content area are based on current research and best practices and are aligned with those States that have exemplary standards. DoDEA recognizes that standards are important because they provide clear expectations for instruction, assessment, and student work and represent an essential component in the process of continuous improvement for student performance and achievement as well as schools overall. The standards will also form the basis for gathering data for assessment of student and school progress.

DoDEA students consistently score above the national average on the NAEP test and above the national average of state tests in math. Minority students have been especially successful, scoring at or near the highest in the nation in mathematics. DoDEA students also maintain a high school graduation rate of approximately 99 percent.

Eligibility

Dependents of military members and Federal civilian employees are eligible to enroll in DoDEA schools. Specifically, the enrolling sponsor must be on extended active duty or a full-time Federal civilian employee, and the sponsor must be residing in permanent living quarters on the installation and the student must be the sponsor's dependent.

Grading and Assessment

Schools submit annual reports of data, and every 5 years they host an on-site validation visit led by education experts from the United States. Following the on-site visits, the experts send a report that includes recommendations for improvements to each of the schools visited. DoDEA also conducts internal monitoring of educational programs to ensure high-quality implementation of new programs and overall effectiveness of existing programs. Monitoring activities may include, but are not limited to, the following activities: surveys, interviews, focus groups, classroom observations, and the analysis of achievement and training data.

DoDEA has also launched a new Web-based reporting system called School Report Cards (SRCs). The SRCs were created as a part of DoDEA's response to greater accountability to parents and stakeholders. They are designed to help families who may be transitioning to DoDEA schools by giving them an overview of a new school before their child enters the classroom. The SRCs also contain valuable information that will be of use to military leaders at the headquarters, area, and district levels so that they can become familiar with the schools that they will be visiting.

DoDEA's SRCs are very similar to the school report cards that are required by the No Child Left Behind Act. They both list school contact information, school improvement goals, a school's student demographic profile, and student academic performance on standardized tests. In the future, it is anticipated that the DoDEA SRCs will include expanded data on graduation rates, attendance rates, and information on elementary and middle schools.³¹



Department of Defense and Department of Education Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Recognizing that successful partnerships are characterized by an exchange of ideas, knowledge, and resources, the Departments of Defense and Education signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to create a formal partnership between the two agencies to support the education of military students. The MOU provides a comprehensive and cohesive structure for collaboration between the two Federal agencies as well as with local, State, and other relevant entities. Through the MOU, the agencies can now leverage their coordinated strengths to improve the educational opportunities of military-connected students.

The DoD and ED have worked together informally for many years, but the MOU formalized these relationships and has allowed both agencies to work together in a more comprehensive manner.³²

Department of Defense Education Activity Educational Partnership

DoDEA's Educational Partnership is providing support to LEAs to transform the responsiveness of educators to children of military families and academic support to improve educational opportunities and outcomes of military students. A significant element of family readiness is an educational system that provides not only a quality education but also one that recognizes and responds to the unique needs of children of military families. To support that need, DoDEA's Educational Partnership is working collaboratively with the Department of Education in any efforts to ease the transition of military students and providing resources to Local Education Agencies (LEA) that educate military children.

DoDEA's Educational Partnership grant program is focused on enhancing student learning, transforming the responsiveness of educators to children of military families, improving parent and family engagement, increasing virtual learning capabilities, and extending support to work with schools serving the National Guard and Reserve. DoDEA's aim is to enhance the education of military students, but funds may be used to raise achievement for all students.

In 2009, DoDEA awarded \$56 million in grants to public schools serving military children throughout the nation. A total of 284 schools within the 44 districts received grant funds and those schools serve over 77,000 military students. The amount of the awards is based on military student enrollment and range from \$300,000 to \$2.5 million, depending on the number of military students at the target schools.

In addition to the grant programs, DoDEA is providing special education modules and related face-to-face training to public-school educators.

DoDEA's Educational Partnership, in coordination with DoD and the Military Services, extended a program to provide professional, licensed, and credentialed counselors to support and augment military connected school districts.

DoD Impact Aid Program

While the U.S. Department of Education's Impact Aid funding provides vital operating funds for affected school districts, the U.S. Congress appropriates funding for the DoD Impact Aid programs. School districts where military children make up at least 20 percent of the enrollment are eligible for the DoD Supplement to Impact Aid. In 2009, 110 school districts received DoD Supplement to Impact Aid funds. Funding awards and levels vary according to the number of eligible LEAs, the number of military-dependent students, and the amount of funding appropriated by Congress.

As with the ED program, the DoD provides additional aid for schools serving two or more military-connected children with severe disabilities that meet certain special education cost criteria. In 2009 113 school districts received the DoD Impact Aid for Children with Severe Disabilities.

When Congress appropriates funds, the DoD Impact Aid for Large Scale Rebasing Program provides financial assistance to LEAs that are heavily impacted by the increase or reduction in military dependent students.

The Department of Defense Education Activity's (DoDEA) Educational Partnership Program is responsible for administering the DoD Impact Aid programs, consistent with its mission of developing, promoting, and maintaining partnerships and communications with local school districts to improve student achievement.

Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Since 2006, the Council of State Governments (CSG)³³ has worked closely with DoD to create a new interstate agreement that addresses the education transition issues faced by children of military families. Federal, State, and local officials, national education groups, school superintendents, and military families have all been involved in constructing The Interstate Compact on Education Opportunity for Military Children (Compact).

The goal of the Compact is to replace the widely varying treatment of transitioning military students with a comprehensive approach that provides a uniform policy in every school district in every State that chooses to join. As of March 2010, 28 States have enacted the Compact—accounting for approximately 81 percent of military-connected, school-age children. While the Compact is not exhaustive in its coverage, it does address the key school transition issues encountered by military families: enrollment, placement and attendance, eligibility, and graduation.

The Compact is an agreement among member States that they will address certain school transition issues for military children in a consistent manner. However, there are limitations to what it covers. The Compact is designed to resolve transition issues only and does not directly address the quality of education in a particular school nor require a State to waive any of its state standards or exit exams. The Compact not intended to impact curriculum or local standards of education. The Compact provisions specifically provide for flexibility and local discretion in course and program placement and on-time graduation within the criteria established by the State. It applies to public schools only. The Compact is a broad framework that allows for rules to be adapted and adjusted as needed without having to go back each time for legislative approval from the member States. It provides for a detailed governance structure at both the State and national levels with built-in enforcement and compliance mechanisms.



Compact Provisions

In its current iteration, the Compact does and does not cover following:

What it Does Cover	What it Does NOT Cover
<p>Educational Records</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents and guardians may receive copies of unofficial records from sending schools and, receiving school must honor those records. Sending schools must send official records within 10 business days of receiving a request. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents cannot request a copy of every paper in the student file. Fees may be charged by a school for unofficial records.
<p>Immunizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The receiving school to obtain required immunizations must provide 30 days. The series of immunizations must be started within 30 days of enrollment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TB testing is not included, since it is a test rather than an immunization. The test may be required before enrollment.
<p>Kindergarten and 1st Grade Entrance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students can continue in the same grade in the receiving State regardless of entrance age requirements if he or she has already enrolled in kindergarten or 1st grade in an accredited public or private school in the sending State and as long the students meets age requirements in the sending State and their academic credits are acceptable to the receiving school board. A student may go to the next grade regardless of age requirements, if he or she has completed kindergarten or 1st grade in the sending State. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A student who has not been enrolled in kindergarten even though they are of eligible age to have started.
<p>Continuation of Grade Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will be initially allowed to continue their enrollment at grade level in the receiving State commensurate with their grade level from the sending State. (An evaluation may be performed subsequently by the receiving State to determine appropriateness of placement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No guarantee of continued placement if not qualified. Receiving State is not obligated to create a course or additional space in a course, beyond a reasonable accommodation.
<p>Course Alignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEAs can waive course or program prerequisites where similar coursework has been completed in the sending school district. (This language gives local officials authority to make accommodations and allows students the opportunity to take more advanced courses rather than repeating similar basic courses.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no mandatory waivers of course prerequisites or other pre conditions.
<p>Extracurricular Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School districts are encouraged to provide for transferring students to be included in extracurricular activities in the receiving school, regardless of deadlines for application, as long as qualification requirements are met. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School officials are not required to hold open or additional spaces.
<p>Absences Due to Deployment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are allowed to request additional absences to visit their parent or guardian during deployment. (This period of time is defined as one month before the service members' departure through six months after return from an assignment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absences beyond the "reasonable accommodation" may not be allowed. LEAs can determine whether the absence during testing is allowable or if the absence is detrimental to student education.
<p>Special Education Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students covered by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) receive the same services identified in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) from the sending State. (Receiving State may subsequently perform an evaluation to ensure proper placement and/or services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exact programs in the receiving State are not required No accommodation for services or programs beyond the requirements of IDEA
<p>Guardianship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If, during deployment, a child resides with caregivers that live outside of the student's current school district, the new school district may not charge tuition to the student and they can continue to attend their current school. Powers of attorney are sufficient for enrollment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guardianship situations not resulting from deployment may not be considered.
<p>Graduation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School districts are allowed but not mandated to waive courses required for graduation if similar coursework has been completed in another school district. If a student moves during his or her senior year and the receiving State cannot waive graduation requirements for similar coursework, then the receiving school district agrees to work with the sending school district to obtain a diploma so the student can graduate on time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no mandatory waivers, but the school must show "good cause" for denial. No mandatory waivers of an exam or acceptance of alternative results.

Each member-State of the Compact establishes State Council and appoints a State Military Family Education Liaison to assist military families and the State in facilitating the implementation of the Compact. Each State also appoints a State Commissioner who serves as a voting member of the National Interstate Commission. In the best case, compliance issues will be handled between school districts, or between the State Councils. If this is not possible, such questions move to the Interstate Commission where dispute resolution processes, such as mediation or arbitration, can be initiated. The DoD is an ex-officio member of the Compact and is represented by DoDEA of DoD.



For both families and schools, it is important to understand the scope and limitations of the Compact, what it covers and what it doesn't. In addition, the process is still in its infancy, and many school districts—in States that have enacted the Compact—are still learning about this new agreement. What's more, as new States join the Compact there is an inevitable transition period in order to align policies and procedures with the Compact. It will be important for both parents and the Service School Liaisons to be actively engaged with their schools during this period.

Eligibility

The Compact only applies to students transferring between member States. If either State is not a member of the Compact, they are not required to comply with its provisions. Students in this case are defined as the children of active-duty members of the uniformed services and some special classes of veterans for brief periods. The Compact does not apply to inactive members of the Guard and Reserves, to most retired veterans, or other DoD employees.

In summary, the adoption of the Interstate Compact will provide significant benefits for the education of military children. However, based on its current status, we must all remember we are on a journey rather than having arrived at a destination. It will take time before all children are covered and the process works smoothly. If a service member is transferring between member States and facing issues believed to be covered by the Compact, to ensure they are brought to the attention of the local school Counselor/Administrator. In addition, local installation School Liaisons are available to assist when needed.



School Liaison Officers

The Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps all have **School Liaison Officers** or points-of-contact who serve a communication and assistance role between the school system, the military, and military families. Each service branch also works with LEAs directly on deployment support and student resiliency.

School Liaison Officers also network, educate, and work in partnership with local schools to provide caring adults to enhance the education experience. Finally, they play an important role as a subject matter expert on an installation, helping military commanders with the support necessary to coordinate and advise military parents of school-aged children, and to solve education-related problems.

School Liaison Officers promote parental involvement in their children's education, develop and coordinate partnerships in education, and educate local communities and schools regarding the needs of military children. In some service branches, this role has been successfully instituted for over 10 years; other branches of service have used school liaison officers in an ad hoc fashion or assigned their duties as part of the overall list of responsibilities of an officer on the installation. The different military branches have different ways of organizing this function, but they all have a similar purpose:

- The Army has School Liaison Officers at the installation level to work across school systems and on behalf of geographically dispersed students. The Army has developed partnership agreements currently with over 300 school systems, which provides a common structure for information sharing.
- The Navy supports its families through Child and Youth Education Services at all major Navy installations. Navy School Liaison Officers can be contacted through the Fleet and Family Support Programs or by using their online resources.
- Each Air Force base has a School Liaison Officers or points-of-contact who advocate for the education needs of military children and assists families with information and referrals regarding local school districts and other education options. The Airman and Family Readiness Center on any Air Force installation has more information.
- Each Marine Corps installation has School Liaison Officers to assist parents and commanders in interacting with local schools and in responding to education-transition issues. The Marine Corps promotes the active involvement of the Installation Commander in the support process for Marine Corps families.

The specific responsibilities of the School Liaison Officer include the following broad categories:

1. Providing information for newly assigned military families, including the following:

- Local school information with online Web links for more detail
- Lists of local support networks and parent groups
- Community resources for extracurricular and tutoring help
- Support for children with special needs or gifted programs

2. Creating communication linkages between parents, installation command, and local educators through the following:

- The creation of advisory groups
- Online resources
- Communication with families, installation commanders, and school leaders
- Participating in community school-related groups and meetings

3. Providing ongoing analysis and feedback on family needs through the following:

- Focus groups, surveys, and case notes
- Referral and resources for mediation and other supports to resolve family concerns
- Keeping command informed and involved on key parent and community concerns

4. Coordinating the installation's Partnerships in Education (PIE) and "Adopt-a-School" initiatives

5. Maintaining communication with school representatives by:

- Identifying and distributing school information to military families
- Supporting school leadership's effort to obtain signed Impact Aid forms from parents

These military officers are central to creating a true partnership between families, military leaders and school leaders, as will be evident throughout this guide.³⁴